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Black Caucus Chairman Lauds HBCUs as Key to Educating African Americans

Los Angeles, CA—Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas, chairman of the Legislative Black Caucus joined educators and celebrities at a press conference Tuesday morning to kick off the **Third Annual Farmers' Angel City Classic football game, which take place at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on September 27, 2008.**

The 2008 Classic features Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia and Prairie View A & M University in Prairie View, Texas. The two historic institutions will compete in a Battle of the Bands, followed by a football game on the grounds of the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. HBCUs are institutions founded primarily for the education of African Americans, although their charters were not exclusionary. Most HBCUs are 50 to 100 years old; the oldest dates back to 1837.

Sen. Ridley-Thomas was the featured speaker, and he challenged all members of the California Legislative Black Caucus to vigorously support the event which highlights the educational opportunities available for minority students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

“As many of you know, Avis and I are proud parents of two HBCU students,” Ridley-Thomas told the audience. “I have also had the distinct honor of writing a number of recommendation letters on behalf of LA area students aspiring to attend HBCUs. Some of these students stated very plainly that they caught the ‘HBCU bug’ through their experience at previous Angel City Classics.”

The Senator called upon his fellow African American state legislators and all African American elected officials in the Los Angeles area to not only attend the Angel City Classic Battle of the Bands and Football game, but to promote and/or sponsor the attendance of high school students from their respective districts to the Classic.

“California high school students need to witness the wonderful example that the students from the participating universities provide,” said Ridley-Thomas. California is one of the primary feeder states of HBCUs like Morehouse, Howard University in Washington, D.C. and Hampton University in Virginia.

Senator Ridley-Thomas also congratulated Mr. John Fleming, President and CEO of BLACK EDUCATIONAL EVENTS LLC for expanding the profile of the event. From its humble beginnings, the Angel City Classic now expects some 40,000 to 50,000 people.

The number of corporate sponsors also has grown to include McDonalds, BMW, Coors and KDAY Radio, among others. The Farmers Insurance Group remains the Title Sponsor and largest supporter of the Classic.

According to the Public Policy Institute of California, the education needs of the workforce will rise substantially with the shift from manufacturing toward service-related industries, thus increasing demand for college educated workers.

Senator Ridley-Thomas concluded his remarks by saying that, “The HBCUs are meeting that demand, and represent a portal of opportunity for the pursuit of academic and/or career/technical education in any number of academic disciplines and skills.”

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